



The Haitian Connection Newsletter

Lorraine Antieau, Editor

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Dear Friends and Supporters of Haitian Connection,

The news from Haiti is not good. In addition to the new Covid-19 surge, Haiti is in the throes of violent crime and gang wars. Food, fuel, and other goods are becoming scarce, and roads are blocked so often as to interfere with commerce, schools and even the ability for the sick to get to a hospital. Gender-based violence continues to be on the rise. There are about 18,000 internal refugees in Port au Prince, including blind and deaf refugees whose small village in an area called "Sou Piste" was burned by bandits. This is enough to bring tears to the eyes of everyone caring about Haiti. These social stresses are not only experienced by the population in Port au Prince, but by Haitian people throughout the country.

A graduate of the University of Fondwa and the University of the Nouvel Grand'Anse who is now a professor at the University of Fondwa in their management department, and who also founded the microcredit organization Fondase, told me that he needs one signature to legalize Fondase to be accepted by the state as a microcredit organization. That signature has been waiting for over a year, but the Minister who needs to sign is long gone, and nobody has replaced him. A lot of money was spent on this quest for one signature, and now it is time to give up. As a board member of Fondase I am deeply disappointed. My young friend who also has a Master's degree in business, is going to Canada for at least a year to further his education. He has already been accepted and is waiting for his visa. This is a person who has always had a vision to contribute to the development of his community and to Haiti. He loves his country deeply, but in this climate of a failed state the difficulties are insurmountable.

Where is the hope? Hope is not optimism, but it is hoping against all hope, and trusting that a way will be found. Change must come from the Haitians themselves, and articles I have read point out how the international community, the UN, the OAS, Caricom, the United States do not appear to be interested in helping implement systemic change.

Haitian Connection is supporting and standing with our Haitian brothers and sisters in the wider Jérémie area. As you can see from the newsletter, we are continuing our work of solidarity with our programs. This year we will reach our goal of building five houses for women and their children, our poultry project is doing very well and providing eggs (protein) for the children and generating incomes for the women in the project. Our new sewing project is off to a good start, and our microbusiness is moving forward. There is real leadership to be found among Haitian women, their strength and their faith encourage me.

Just a reminder that a house costs \$2,000, supporting our cash without condition program is \$30 per month. If you feel so moved to give, it is greatly appreciated. While Jérémie remains relatively peaceful, many, many people are sick from Covid. Maxime Roumer who together with me founded the University of the Grand'Anse died of Covid just recently. Your support is needed and all the money goes directly to programming.

Counting on your prayers and support,

Renate

Kitchen Literacy: Scholarship Students Pay It Forward



Some of our scholarship students are teaching the women who work in the kitchen at Jean Bellune School how to write their name. Now all the women no longer have to make a small cross when they need to sign something, but they all can now write their name. It is a pleasure to see how much more confidence they have gained, and how the students have worked with them very patiently. The students are also quite proud of what they have been able to teach the women.

New Sewing Project Begins in Deschamps



The women of Deschamps, a community that Haitian Connection has been active in for quite some time, had expressed the wish to have some sewing machines. They see this as a source of potential income, especially when the new school year starts, so they can sew uniforms for the children in the community. They also want to sew clothes for special occasions and other events.

We were able to secure 4 manual sewing machines (manual, since there is little electricity), and also provided some money so they could purchase some needed materials. One aspect of this project that we are very excited about is that it is a cooperative endeavor, rather than an individual business. We wish them success.



Jean Bellune School Kitchen Improvements



The kitchen at the school in Jean Bellune is functioning very well. Some shelves have been added, to improve storage and keep food and containers off the floor. This is helping to keep things orderly and organized and makes the kitchen look quite good.

Chicken Pilot Project Going Well



The chickens given to our Cash Without Conditions recipients are producing well. The eggs provide some income for the women, and also increase nutrition for their kids, since there is little protein in the kids' diets. Eventually, the women will also be able to sell chicks when



eggs hatch. This early success is exciting, and we hope to add some more chickens to the project.

Microcredit Entrepreneur Supports Latibolye Community



Community-minded Esther Jean Jacques is a true leader in Latibolye. She runs the literacy program and also runs a successful microcredit business. Despite Covid 19 running rampant all over Haiti and the insecurity which is getting worse by the day, she is hanging in there and offering the community items they need for their daily living. They do not have to make the 2-hour trek to Jérémie to find groceries and hygiene items, they can purchase those right in their own community. With coronavirus everywhere, this provides them with a bit of protection because they can shop from their neighbor next door.



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In addition, Esther put on a small celebration with our women's group and everybody brought fruit. Esther took the opportunity to educate the women on how to wash and clean the fruits.

Haiti has 99+ problems, but to produce delicious fruit in large quantity is not one of them.

Four Housing Construction Projects Completed to Date in 2021

I am thrilled to report that the two houses that we featured when they were under construction are now finished and happy families are living in them. Two additional houses have also been completed and occupied by their new owners:



The first house belongs to Meriane Dimé: She lives in a small village called Debarasse. She is 53 years old and has seven children, three girls and four boys. The ages of her children are 33, 31, 29, 27, 25, 23, and 18. Only the 18-year-old still goes to school. She is in 9th grade and goes to a private school. Some of Meriane's children already have children themselves, but they are not working and have no income.

Nine people live in the house, including Meriane's husband, who is elderly and sick. He is not able to work. Meriane herself is a small vendor. She buys items on credit and then sells them in the market so she can get food for the family. They used to live in a small rundown house, and now she takes great pride in her new home. She says it is the best present ever, and that it also improves her standing in the community. Meriane is very grateful to Haitian Connection and Renate, who made this possible.

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The second house is owned by Dernierese Geffrad. She lives in an area called Prince. She is 39 years old and has six children, three girls and three boys, aged 25, 19, 17, 14, 12, and 6 years old. Two of the children attend a state school, and three are in a private school. Her church helps with the school tuition. Dernierese is a small vendor selling food items. A total of nine people live in the house. After her husband abandoned her, she lived with another family. Some of her children lived with other people, because nobody could take the whole family. Now she is very happy, because the family is reunited in a brand-new house. She thanks Haitian Connection and Renate for this miracle.



The third new home owner is Natacia. She is 41 years old and has 2 children: a 10-year-old girl and a 14-year-old boy. She also cares for three other children that live with her. All of the children are in private schools, and the local church helps them with their school fees. Natacia's husband abandoned her and found another more beautiful woman, she said. She previously lived in a small ruined house (see photo on left below). Natacia runs a small business

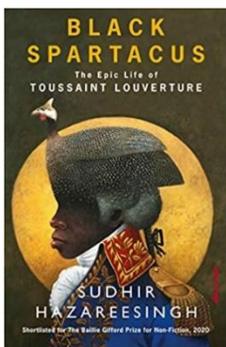
from the porch of her house, buying small items on credit and reselling them to provide for her children. She is very grateful for the house and says that it is the greatest gift you can give to someone who is in need of a home.



Phara is the proud owner of the fourth house. She is 32 years old and has 3 children, a girl 11 years old, and two boys, 8 and one and a half years old. There are 6 people living in the house. The two older children are going to a small private school in her area. Phara is not involved in any income generating activity because with the youngest boy she cannot really leave the house to look for work. Her family is helping her out with the children's expenses. She is very grateful for the house, especially in a year that has been so difficult. She thanks Haitian Connection and says she will pray for us daily.

Book Corner

Black Spartacus: The Epic Life of Toussaint Louverture by Sudhir Hazareesingh



Winner of the 2021 Wolfson History Prize, shortlisted for the Baillie Gifford Prize, Finalist for the PEN / Jacqueline Bograd Weld Award for Biography, named a best book of the year by The Economist, Times Literary Supplement, New Statesman

An award-winning new interpretation of the life of the Haitian revolutionary Toussaint Louverture. Employing groundbreaking archival research and a keen interpretive lens, Sudhir Hazareesingh restores Toussaint to his full complexity in *Black Spartacus*. *Black Spartacus* offers a vigorous argument in favor of “getting back to Toussaint” -- a call to take Haiti’s founding father seriously on his own terms, and to honor his role in shaping the postcolonial world to come.

Haitian Connection

Haitian Connection is a 501(c) (3) tax exempt organization founded in 2005, which focuses on the needs of women, children and young adults in the Jérémie region of southwest Haiti. A variety of projects have already touched thousands of lives: houses have been built for more than 97 women and their children; a small microcredit program is providing economic opportunity for women in 2 communities; a potable water initiative is giving healthy water to one thousand families; and local school teachers have received training in the Child-to-Child method. Haitian Connection's Divergent Thinking Institute is providing Divergent Thinking seminars all over Haiti.

As a response to the earthquake in January 2010, and its psychological aftermath, Haitian Connection has established a mental health program in Jérémie to provide counseling as people resettle, tally their losses and adjust to a new reality. 27 members of the community have been trained in psychological first aid. This served the greater Jérémie area well after Hurricane Matthew in October of 2016. Our mental health agents were able to hold community meetings to give people an opportunity to debrief and receive some training in stress reduction techniques.

Support Us

Haitian Connection is a 501(c) (3) nonprofit corporation registered in Illinois and your gifts are tax deductible. Our projects depend on volunteers and the financial support of people who desire to help.

The cost of building a home for a woman and her family in Jérémie is \$2,000. The houses have three rooms and a latrine. You could contribute to a house, or even get your church/organization to sponsor a whole house. After Hurricane Matthew, this has become a priority for people in the region.

Scholarships for needy students from elementary to secondary schools.

Microcredit group: contributions accepted.

Mental Health Program: contributions to mental health center accepted (total cost for one year \$10,000)

Support for training programs in Divergent Thinking, mental health, Child-to-Child, and continuing education. For every program for 25 people we provide a meal for all participants and give the facilitators a stipend (about \$500 per training).

To support our projects financially, donate online by visiting our website at: www.HaitianConnection.org and clicking on the PayPal button.

If you would prefer to send your donation by mail, please address checks to: **Haitian Connection**
5300 South Shore Drive # 27
Chicago, IL 60615

When you order from Amazon.com, giving to Haitian Connection is easy! Simply go to <https://smile.amazon.com/> to get started!

Get Involved

We are looking for volunteers: English teachers, educators, specialists in various fields to give short conferences or seminars.

To volunteer, contact **Renate Schneider** at haitianconnection@gmail.com or by phone at **312/493-3719**; in Haiti: **011/509/3 463-7532**

